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Miss Conover's Vocation

A PLAY IN TWO ACTS

By MARY C. ROBINSON



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Asheville, N. C.

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MISS CONOVER'S VOCATION

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

ESTHER CONOVER, }
WINIFRED WHITNEY, } Nurses at Mission Hospital.
CAROLINE PHIPPS, Matron at Mission Hospital.
MARGARET SEYMOUR.
MRS. CHAUNCEY OGDEN BROWN.
MRS. BERRY WHITE.
PEARL JOHNSON.
SAPOLIO SHINOLA JOHNSON.
MR. HARDING HASTY.
JOHNNIE BATES.
JEFF, Dr. Didd's Janitor.
DR. JOHN DIDD.
MR. EDWARD TINGLE.
RICHARD ARMITAGE, of Charlotte.
CHARLEY, Orderly at Mission Hospital.
NURSES.
PHYSICIANS.
THE DELIRIOUS PATIENT.

ACT I

Dr. Didd's office in the Medical Building. As the curtain rises Jeff is discovered oiling the floor and singing a plantation melody. He stops as Miss Seymour enters, carrying a few flowers.

JEFF: "Mornin,' Miss Seymour, mornin.' Doctor's late again; he jest phome me he was out all night with ol' Miss Judd. She's pow'ful sick; got a valve in her heart! I don' know whether she done swallowed it or it jest natchelly growed; but I know they's no-account, triffin' people, those Juddses; Doctor ain' gwine git nothin' fer all his takin' keer of 'em."

MISS SEYMOUR (*arranging flowers on the doctor's desk*): "His pay, Jeff, is the very last thing the doctor thinks of."

JEFF: "Co'se I knows that. Me an' the doctor has been curin' the nicknamed, the stalled, an' the blin' fer de pas' ten yeahs. Ef dey pays de money, we-all's mighty s'prised, an'

spen's it. Ef dey don' pay, de doctor 'lows dey's done we all a favor to ask our 'dvice. But 'tain' right, Miss Margaret, you know dat."

MISS SEYMOUR: "Whatever the doctor does is right, Jeff."

JEFF: "That's jest you-all's notion. Now you heah me, Miss Margaret—de doctor ain' none too stout, some time he gwine brek"——

MISS SEYMOUR (*anxiously*): "Why, Jeff, what do you mean? Is there anything the matter with the doctor?"

JEFF: "Laws seks, Honey, not right now. But yo' know, and ol' Jeff knows that it teks a mighty stout man to keep a-rasslin' wid dese yeah new-fangled, courageous diseases! An' he jes' 'bleeged to get his res' at night. Let sick folkses howl an' groan and wek up whosomever they mus,' but they ain' got no call to wek up the doctor. I'm gwine to speak my min' to Doctor Didd about sech doin's, I is."

(*Exit.*)

MISS SEYMOUR (*taking up gloves from the desk*): "Just look at this! See how his gloves are torn; he thinks of every one's comfort but his own. I'll take them and mend them." (*Goes to mirror to take off her hat, looks at picture on the mantel*). "O, if father would only let me be a trained nurse! To stand with him by the bedside of the suffering—to share his anxieties—ah me! (*Puts back picture*). "Well, I *hope* she is worthy of him." (*Telephone rings*). "Hello—

"Dr. Didd's office—no, the doctor is not here yet—can't get her to take her medicine—Had a dreadful night—Want the doctor at once—All right, Mrs. Smithkins, I'll give your message." (*Turns away*). "Another one of those charity patients, but it's all the same to the doctor. O, if only—but there, I ought to be satisfied to be near him and help him a little." (*Gathers up the mail and goes out and typewriter is heard without. Enter Dr. Didd, followed by Jeff, who takes his hat and coat*).

DR. DIDD: "Good morning, Jeff." (*Goes to desk*). "Has Miss Seymour taken the mail?"

JEFF: "Mornin,' doctor. Yessah, Miss Seymour done tuk de despondents. How's ol' Miss Judd? I'se jest natchelly certain she's pearter this mornin' than you is—a-rackettin' aroun' wid her all las' night!" (*Enter Miss Seymour*).

DR. DIDD: "Miss Judd? Hm—yes, she's better, Jeff. Good morning, Miss Seymour."

MISS SEYMOUR: "Good morning, doctor. Mrs. Smithkins 'phoned. Alice Belle knocks the medicine out of her hand every time she tries to give it to her. They want you to come over as soon as possible."

DR. DIDD: "They seem to think I'm a patent baby trainer."

Alice Belle is a spoiled child. When I get over there, she'll take that castor oil or something else she needs about as bad." (*Phone rings*).

MISS SEYMOUR: "Hello—yes, Dr. Didd's office—hold the phone, please—doctor."

DR. DIDD (*at the phone*): "Hello—yes—no, not before 4 o'clock—Have an operation at the hospital at 11. Hm—Hm—yes.—You might call Dr. Mild—Why Mild? Well, he's not Sevier—Interesting case, very—sorry I can't come. Good-by." (*Turns from phone*). "Jeff, send them in." (*Exeunt Jeff and Miss Seymour, enter old mountaineer woman, head wrapped up and hat perched on top*).

DR. DIDD: "Good morning, Mrs. White, I hope you're not much sick."

MRS. WHITE: "O Doctor, I've been loungin' roun' an' sufferin' for more than a week. It began with a cricket in my neck; I couldn't move myself any more than I could last winter when I had the dago in my back"——

DR. DIDD: "The *what* in your back?"

MRS. WHITE: "The *dago*."

DR. DIDD: "O, you mean the *lumbago*!"

MRS. WHITE: "It was plum dago enough for me! But this misery has gone up in the cores of my neck. Dr. Elijah 'lows I've got a process in my ear. Now do be keeful, doctor; hit air a-hurtin' me pow'ful bad. Hit's mighty tender."

DR. DIDD: "Turn your head this way—there—O, yes. Pressure on the ear drum, caused by accumulation of wax."

MRS. WHITE: "But I hain't had no whacks! I'd jest like to see Berry White try it"——

DR. DIDD (*laughing*): "That wasn't what I meant, Mrs. White. Berry is a brave man, but I reckon he knows when to show the white feather. Jeff, take Mrs. White through to Dr. Tingle's room. He'll fix that ear all right. The pain will stop at once."

(*Enter extremely fashionable lady*).

DR. DIDD: "Good morning, madam. Will you be seated?"

MRS. BROWN: "Ah, good morning, Doctor. I am Mrs. Chauncey Ogden Brown, of New York."

DR. DIDD: "I am pleased to meet you, Mrs. Brown."

MRS. BROWN: "Mrs. *Chauncey Ogden Brown*. My trouble is a nervous one, Doctor. We hoped that Asheville air would be all that was necessary to give me relief. I have been at Kenilworth ten days, but I haven't improved at all. I want to put myself under your care; your sanitarium has been so favorably spoken of"——

DR. DIDD: "I beg your pardon, Mrs. Brown—"

MRS. BROWN: "Mrs. *Chauncey Ogden Brown*."

DR. DIDD: "You have been misinformed. I have no sanitarium."

MRS. BROWN: "No sanitarium! Do you mean to say—Am I to understand?"

DR. DIDD: "It is simply a mistake, my dear madam; Dr. Warble's sanitarium on Haywood street, for the treatment of nervous diseases, is probably what you are looking for."

MRS. BROWN: "And you are not Dr. Warble! This is very peculiar! Perhaps you will have the goodness to tell me who you are!"

DR. DIDD: "With pleasure, madam. I am Dr. John Didd."

MRS. BROWN (*with lifted lorgnette*): "Oh—ah—indeed. This is most singular; I can't understand how it has happened! Under these most embarrassing circumstances, you will of course call up the sanitarium for me, and make an appointment with Dr. Warble."

DR. DIDD: "Most assuredly, Mrs. Brown."

MRS. BROWN: "Mrs. Chauncey Ogden Brown."

DR. DIDD (*at the phone*): "Hello—1036, please—Who is this?—No, I don't want the Candy Kitchen—Is this the sanitarium? O, Miss Smiley, is the doctor there? Dr. Didd would like to speak to him—Hello Doctor, Mrs. Brown of New York"——

MRS. BROWN: "Mrs. Chauncey Ogden Brown."

DR. DIDD: "Yes, Mrs. Brown would like to make an appointment with you for this evening; 4:15? All right, 4:15 this evening, at 31 Haywood street, Mrs. Brown."

MRS. BROWN: "4:15? What a horribly inconvenient time! I'll not be through with the hairdresser. And Fluffy is to have his bath at 4. Perhaps I can get there before 5. Why don't you have a sign on your office, Dr. Didd? It would have saved all this trouble."

DR. DIDD: "Pardon me, madam, my name is plainly lettered on the door. Perhaps my professional card"——(*offers it*).

MRS. BROWN: "Thank you, I hardly think I shall need it. Let me see—4:15 this afternoon. Tell me, why do you Southerners always say evening when you mean afternoon?"

DR. DIDD: "That is beyond me to explain, Mrs. Brown—Mrs. Chauncey Ogden Brown—even New Yorkers sometimes make mistakes!"

MRS. BROWN: "Don't be impertinent, young man! Good morning."

DR. DIDD (*bowing her out*): "Good morning, madam."

(*Enter Pearl and Sapolio Shinola*).

DR. DIDD: "Howdy, Pearl. What's the matter this time? I hope you're not sick."

PEARL: "Me sick? No, not me, Doctor. It's Sapolio Shinola again."

DR. DIDD: "Sapolio Shinola, is it? And what's Sapolio Shinola been doing now? Come here to me, you young rascal, you're too heavy for that little sister of yours."

PEARL: "He ain' heavy, Doctor; it's jest as easy to tote him!"

DR. DIDD: "Sapolio Shinola's pretty sick, Pearl; he has some fever; he's got a galloping pulse"——

PEARL: "O, Lawdy! O, Lawdy! I didn't never 'spect no sech thing as dat! Is it pow'ful hard to cure, Doctor?"

DR. DIDD: "Hard to cure? What?"

PEARL: "The gallopsy-pulse. 'Tain't lak de chicken smocks or de Roseallover, is it, Doctor?"

DR. DIDD (*aside*): "Roseallover; that isn't bad;" (*to Pearl*): "Well, not exactly, Pearl. Now tell me what has this chap been eating?"

PEARL: "Eating, Doctor? Jest nuthin' 'tall today. The grits and gravy an' corn pone an' sweet 'tater an' coffee what I done guv him fer brekfus come right up again, doctor."

DR. DIDD: "Grits and gravy and corn pone and sweet potatoes and coffee! Heavens, Pearl! What do you mean by feeding this child like that? Haven't I told you he mustn't have solid food? Do you want this baby to go where his mother's gone, or do you want him to grow up and be a comfort and a help to you? I tell you Pearl, I can't do anything for him if you won't do exactly as I say."

PEARL: "O, Lawdy, Doctor, don' say he gwine to die! I couldn' bear to lose him, Doctor! I'll starve him to deff on milk ef you'll only cure him this time!"

DR. DIDD: "O, he'll come out all right if you'll do what I tell you to. No more such truck as grits and gravy and sweet potatoes—nothing but warm milk. Take him home and put him to bed; give him one of these tablets every half hour till they're gone. I'll come over and see him tomorrow."

PEARL: "Thankye, Doctor, you'se mighty good to me and Sapolio Shinola."

DR. DIDD: "Have you got some sort of go-cart to take that baby home in?"

PEARL: "O, yes, Doctor, I'se got the suppressed wagon I totes my washin' in."

DR. DIDD: "And how is the laundry business, pretty good, Pearl? Here, buy yourself a new apron, child. (*Gives her half a dollar*).

PEARL: "Thankye, Doctor, I sure does need it. But I'se a-gittin' plenty of washin' and Sapolio Shinola ain' a mite of trouble. He jest dabbles in the starch bucket and the bluein' or goes to sleep a-suckin' a clothespin. Tell the doctor by-by yo' Shimola!" (*Exeunt*).

DR. DIDD: "That's about the best little pickaninny I ever knew; she'd work herself to death for her daddy and Sapolio Shinola. She'd do more for her fellow creatures, white or black, than Mrs. Chauncey Ogden Brown of New York, I'm sure of that."

(Enter Johnnie Bates with a bleeding face).

DR. DIDD: "What's the matter with you, Johnnie? Have you been fighting again? I'm going to tell your father and let him take a hand in the next fracas. Come here, let me see your face."

JOHNNIE: "But I haven't been fighting this time. A feller pushed me down at the skating rink; there was two or three of us in a bunch and I cut my face on Bob Bundy's skate."

DR. DIDD: "The skating rink, Johnnie! I know you're a reckless little rascal, but I thought you had sense enough to stay away from that skating rink, after breaking your arm there last winter! Here, let me see; it's a pretty bad cut. I reckon we can save the eye. Jeff, bring me that sponge and basin, and that black box. Now, Johnnie, be brave!"

JOHNNIE: "Say, is it going to hurt bad? Do you have to sew it up, Doctor?" *(Doctor puts on plaster in strips).*

DR. DIDD: "I'm going to try to fix it with adhesive plaster. But if you don't stay away from that fool rink, Johnnie, you're going to get hurt sometime so that I'll have to cut you up and sew you together again; and I might get the pieces mixed. Now, what do you think your mother will say to such a looking face?" *(Leads him to mirror).* "You look like the terrible Turk after his bout with Olsen. You won't be able to chew beefsteak for a week or two."

JOHNNIE: "Gee, but I am a guy, Doctor! I'll have to cut home through the alleys. It must have been an awful cut; I'm glad you didn't have to sew it."

DR. DIDD: "Goodby, Johnnie, come back Tuesday." *(Exit Johnnie).* "I'd give my new forceps just to see Johnnie's face when he soaks that plaster off and finds a little inch-long scratch! Maybe it will teach him a lesson. He's always cutting or breaking himself up."

(Enter Mr. Harding Hasty).

DR. DIDD: "Good morning, Mr. Hasty; a beautiful morning."

MR. HASTY: "Good morning, sir. Will you kindly explain to me the meaning of this bill?" *(Offers bill to Dr. Didd).*

DR. DIDD: "Have a chair, Mr. Hasty. Why, what do you mean? There doesn't seem to be anything to explain; this is simply an ordinary bill, made out in the usual way."

MR. HASTY: "Simply an ordinary bill made out in the usual way! It's enough to give Rockefeller a chill! Daylight rob-

bers you doctors are, every one of you. I say you *are*! I wonder what an extraordinary bill made out in an unusual way would be like! It's enough to make a man study medicine and be his own doctor. Are you aware, Dr. Didd, that I paid a bill of yours for over \$100, for professional services the first of last month?"

DR. DIDD: "I do not recall the circumstance, Mr. Hasty, but I have no reason to question your assertion. I have no doubt you did."

MR. HASTY: "Do you take me for a Rothschild or a Vanderbilt? Do you think I'm made of money? You doctors bleed a man at every pore."

DR. DIDD: "Pardon me, Mr. Hasty, but bleeding is out of date; it is seldom resorted to in modern practice."

MR. HASTY: "O, you can be funny about it if you want to. It isn't funny to the man that has to pay. But I swear I *won't* pay it. It is outrageous; it is preposterous! Go ahead and sue me for it; I'll go to jail before I pay a red cent of such an unreasonable bill! To think of it—\$100 a month ago, and now, with all the family in good health as far as I know, you render me a bill for \$90—\$90!"

DR. DIDD: "Let me see that bill again, Mr. Hasty. Ah,—yes—I remember the circumstances now perfectly. You see this little atomizer?" (*Mr Hasty dodges the spray from atomizer.*) "Your daughter wanted one like it and couldn't get it in town. I let her have one at cost. It was just 90 cents! Look at your bill, Mr. Hasty. Do you need glasses, or haven't you ever studied decimals? Do you see the point?"

MR. HASTY (*sheepishly*): "Why—why—why yes, I do, Doctor. I—I—beg your pardon; I do, indeed. A most mortifying mistake."

DR. DIDD: "Don't mention it. It is such a trifle, allow me to receipt the bill and cancel the indebtedness."

MR. HASTY: "O, no, no, not at all; I couldn't think of it."

DR. DIDD: "Take it then to my stenographer." (*Calls*): "Miss Seymour." (*Enter Miss Seymour*). "Miss Seymour, Mr. Hasty wishes to pay his bill." (*Mr. Hasty gives bill*). "Ah—don't forget to give Mr. Hasty his dime. Is that satisfactory, Mr. Hasty? Thank you, good morning." (*Exit Miss Seymour*.)

MR. HASTY (*retiring*): "A thousand pardons, Doctor, really—good morning."

(*Enter Richard Armitage, Jeff holding on to his coat*).

DR. DIDD: "Well, Armitage, where in the world did you come from? This *is* a surprise. I'm mighty glad to see you, old man. How is everybody in Charlotte?"

JEFF: "He done come in out'n his turn, Dr. Didd!"

MR. ARMITAGE: "I got so deuced tired waiting for that gang to run the gauntlet"——

DR. DIDD: "Why that's all right, Dick. Is there any one special out there, Jeff?"

JEFF: "No, sir, not 'zackly; I don't guess they is."

DR. DIDD: "Well, send them through to Dr. Tingle, I want to talk with Mr. Armitage."

JEFF: "All right, sir, if you say so. But dat man ain' got no call to come in out'n his tu'n, Doctor." (*Exit*).

MR. ARMITAGE: "Your janitor is something of a martinet, isn't he?"

DR. DIDD: "Martinet? I should say so. Jeff runs the whole office. I couldn't practice medicine without him. But what's the matter with you Dick? You're not looking quite your usual sunny self. I hope this isn't a professional visit."

MR. ARMITAGE: "O, no, John. I'm all right; that's just what's the matter. I'm too confoundedly healthy! I wish I wasn't."

DR. DIDD (*whistles*): "Why this is something new in my office. The people in the outer room would gladly relieve you of some of your superfluous health, if they could."

MR. ARMITAGE: "But they can't, more's the pity. And that's just exactly what I want you to do."

DR. DIDD (*with concern*): "Say, Dick, you haven't been having typhoid, have you, and got your brain slightly mixed?"

MR. ARMITAGE: "Having typhoid? No such blessed luck. My brain's all right. I want to see what sort of a head piece you've got. Now what can you do to make me decently and respectably, but not too dangerously sick? Hm?"

DR. DIDD: "By George, this is a puzzler; it's too many for me. By the way you go jigging around the room, I might think you had the St. Vitus dance! Sit down man, can't you, and keep still, and explain yourself? What do you mean, anyhow?"

MR. ARMITAGE (*dropping into a chair*): "I mean exactly what I say; I want to be sick."

DR. DIDD (*walking over to him*): "Maybe you are, and don't know it. H'm; skin's cool—your pulse is steady. Let me see your tongue."

MR. ARMITAGE: "O, don't be such an idiot, Dick. I'm perfectly well—physically. Haven't I told you that's just what's the matter?"

DR. DIDD: "Ah—hm—I seem to get a faint glimmer of light. But go on, let's have your tale of woe."

MR. ARMITAGE: "Well, I suppose I'll have to tell the whole story. Was there ever such an impossible state of affairs?"

DR. DIDD: "I can't say, old man, as I'm still in the dark. But out with it, whatever it is."

MR. ARMITAGE: "Did I ever tell you about Esther Conover?"

DR. DIDD: "Esther Conover—Esther Conover. Let me see—which one was she? The tall, blonde, Baltimore belle?"

MR. ARMITAGE: "Hang it all, John, don't go back into the dark ages. No, she wasn't. Miss Conover is my fiancée—or at least she was until about seven weeks ago."

DR. DIDD: "You haven't been fancying Dick, that I could set a broken engagement, have you? Do it up in splints or liquid glass?"

MR. ARMITAGE: "Now, you just wait until I get through, and you'll see where your part comes in. Well, as I said, about seven or eight weeks ago"—(*pulls letter from pocket*) "yes, it was February 14th I got this letter. I'm going to read it to you."

DR. DIDD: "All right, go ahead. I don't mind if you don't."

MR. ARMITAGE (*reading*): "My Dear Richard:—Do not think me fickle or impulsive when I tell you that our engagement is at an end. It is only that I was too hasty in thinking that I could marry. I have thought and thought and thought over the matter, and I am certain that the only way in which I can live out my life—the only way in which I can fulfil my highest destiny, is to follow the sacred calling of a nurse. Trained nursing is my vocation; of this I am deeply and irrevocably convinced. Not to walk in the path so plainly pointed out to me, would be to wrong you, Dick, to wrong myself, and to wrong humanity. In the career I have chosen, you can, of course, have no part. At first you may resent my decision, in your usual impulsive way"—(that's a nice little stab, isn't it, John? Me impulsive!)—"but it will do no good, and will only give me pain if you try to make me falter in my purpose. I am going away from home; I shall receive no letters you may write nor will it be of the slightest use for you to try to find me. I shall not see you again. Isn't it better so? I am as always, your friend,
Esther Conover."

"A cheerful kind of a valentine, isn't it?"

DR. DIDD: "She seems to have washed her hands of you all right, Dick, and then given you a shower bath with the water! She spared you just one thing, old chap; she didn't say she'd be a sister to you."

MR. ARMITAGE: "If she'd have thought of it, she *would* have put it in."

DR. DIDD: "You hadn't had any kind of a quarrel with your fiancée, had you? No 'little rift within the lover's lute'?"

MR. ARMITAGE: "Quarrel? No, not a bit of it. I do remember Esther had seemed pre-occupied—acted absent-minded; but that's all."

DR. DIDD: "Well, what have you been doing about it? Have you tried to find the damsel-errant?"

MR. ARMITAGE: "Tried to find her? I haven't been doing anything else for seven weeks. But her mother is dead, and she twists her father around her little finger. He was as dumb as a fish; I couldn't get a word out of him, or out of any other member of the family. But I bribed one of the maids to copy the address from her sister's letters, and in that way found out where she had gone. She is here, at Mission Hospital!"

DR. DIDD: "Whew—ew! At Mission Hospital! You don't say so! I wonder if she's the pretty new probationer."

MR. ARMITAGE: "Not a doubt about it. She is small and fair, with the sweetest face in the world. There have you seen her?" (*Takes a picture from his pocket and hands to Dr. Didd*).

DR. DIDD: "Yes, that's our new nurse, all right. She was accepted the other day, and has donned the uniform. You ought to see how sweet she looks in it. She is simply bewitching. Dick, you're a lucky fellow!"

MR. ARMITAGE: "Deucedly unlucky, you mean! To have such a girl as that and then to lose her! But you're going to help me out, aren't you, John?"

DR. DIDD: "I'll help you in any way and every way I can; you know that, old man."

MR. ARMITAGE: "Well then hypodermic something or other into me quick, and send me over to the hospital." (*Rolls up sleeve*). "If I can only get in there, I can get a chance to talk to Esther and waken her sympathies. But it is the hardest place to get into. I've haunted Charlotte and Woodfin streets, till the residents think I'm a suspicious character. I've tried and tried to see her; but they seem to have an anti-lover league at the hospital, and they're all in it. No matter who answers the door, when I ask for Miss Conover, she's out, she's asleep, she's on duty! They simply won't let me see her. Come, now, what are you going to give me? Mumps, bronchitis, or bubonic plague?"

DR. DIDD: "Why, see here, Dick, I don't see how I can do anything like that. I wouldn't dare to inoculate you with any disease if I could."

MR. ARMITAGE: "If you could? Well, I must say you're a pretty kind of a doctor. What's the use of studying medicine, I'd like to know!"

DR. DIDD: "Do be reasonable, Dick. We don't study medicine to find out how to give people diseases. It's our mission to cure, not to kill. You seem to be laboring under a delusion." (*Telephone rings*). "Hello—yes, Dr. Didd's office—Hm—O, no, no—I said put ice on his head and a hot water bag at his feet—you'll boil his brains if you keep that up—I have an important

case at the office just now—I'll be in this evening—I'll come as soon as I can—goodby.”—(*Enter Dr. Tingle*). “This is my friend Mr. Armitage, Dr. Tingle.” (*They shake hands*). “Are you through in the office? Well, I wish you'd make your first call at the Pittman's. That fool woman has had a hot water bag on the baby's head for the last two hours.” (*Exit Dr. Tingle*). “I say, Dick, I don't just see how I am going to help you”——

MR. ARMITAGE: “O, I suppose not. This is simply horrible; it is enough to drive a man to drink!”

DR. DIDD (*brightly*): “Why, that's an idea! Why not go on a comfortable little spree, and develop a nice, gentlemanly case of jim-jams? I could get you in on that.”

MR. ARMITAGE: “No, no, that wouldn't do. You don't know Esther. She's a way-up W. C. T. U. She'd never speak to me again as long as she lived. You'll have to think of something else.” (*Enter Miss Seymour*).

MISS SEYMOUR: “I beg your pardon, Doctor, but this letter asks an immediate reply. Will you dictate the answer before mail time?” (*Dr. Didd looks at the letter*).

DR. DIDD: “Just answer it in the affirmative, Miss Seymour, that will be all right.” (*Exit Miss Seymour*).

MR. ARMITAGE: “That's a pretty little girl, John. She's about Esther's size.”

DR. DIDD: “She's a nice little girl. Dr. Tingle thinks so, anyhow; but his attentions don't seem to be appreciated. Now, about this other matter; if we could only work it so as to get you into the hospital, I believe we could win Miss Conover to your way of thinking. I know a thing or two about women. If you were just interestingly ill, I'd have Miss Whitney put on as your special nurse. She's handsome and clever; we could take her into the secret and she'd help us out willingly. I don't mind telling you I have aspirations in that direction.” (*Looks at the picture on the mantel*).

MR. ARMITAGE: “O, that's it! But if she's a trained nurse you can have no part in her career!” That's what Esther says.”

DR. DIDD: “Nonsense! trained nurses are just like other girls—only more so!”

MR. ARMITAGE: “The plan is all right. I believe it would work. I wouldn't mind giving Esther a jealous pang or two. So go ahead, Doc., and pump something into me.”

DR. DIDD: But, Dick, I've told you I don't dare do it. Don't you ever have anything the matter with you? Indigestion? Tonsilitis? O, what's the use of being so healthy! I can't think of anything else but a broken bone——.” (*Mr. Armitage dashes across the room and jumps through the window*).

DR. DIDD: (*rushing after him*). “O! O! Heavens, what

recklessness!" (*Curtain falls, as Miss Seymour and Mr. Tingle dash upon the stage. It rises again showing Miss Seymour leaning back against the window.*)

MISS SEYMOUR: "O, it was too terrible! He caught and hung on the telephone wires! Dr. Major's automobile was coming down Haywood street! Then he fell and it struck him! Isn't it awful? He must have been killed!"

DR. TINGLE: "Miss Seymour, this is too much for you; you will be ill." (*Leads her to a chair and gets her a glass of water.*) "What an appealing, little thing she is. Jove, I wish she'd look at me like she does at Dr. Didd."

MISS SEYMOUR: "Thank you, Doctor; O, dear, to think of that poor, young man jumping out of the window for the love of a girl!"

DR. TINGLE: "O, that's nothing. I'd do as much for a dear little girl I know, if it would do any good."

MISS SEYMOUR (*startled*): "O—O! I'm better now, thank you. O, they're bringing him in here." (*Enter the doctors carrying Armitage.*)

DR. DIDD: "Right here on the couch. How are you now, old chap? How do you feel?"

MR. ARMITAGE: "Perfectly satisfied—perfectly satisfied."

FIRST DOCTOR: "Perfectly satisfied? Say, he must be delirious. Let's see that right arm. Broken, Didd, at the elbow."

SECOND DOCTOR: "This knee is out of fix, too. Not broken, but badly strained. It's a wonder he wasn't killed."

DR. DIDD: "No internal injuries, do you think?"

MR. ARMITAGE: "O, what a fuss about a trifle! Of course there are no internal injuries. A fellow couldn't play centre rush on a college team for four years and not know how to fall. How's our little scheme now, John?"

DR. DIDD: "Hanged if I hadn't forgotten all about that. O, you'll get there all right, Dick. Dr. Tingle, call up the hospital and send for an ambulance."

DR. TINGLE: "Hello, Central, give me 63 quick. Hello—that you, Miss Phipps? Get a room ready for a patient of Dr. Didd's at once!—Badly injured by a fall—Haven't room on the second floor—only a small one on the third—How about the first? The Battle room? That's the very thing. We'll be right over—goodby." (*Enter Jeff breathlessly.*)

JEFF: "I done fotch the *avalanche*! It is a-waitin' right now, Doctor."

DR. DIDD: "That was thoughtful of you, Jeff. Let's take him right along; we can set the arm and see to his other injuries better over there. Now then, all ready."

(*The doctors carry Mr. Armitage out. Dr. Tingle remains with Miss Seymour. He helps her to a chair and fans her as the curtain falls.*)

CURTAIN.

CHORUS OF NURSES.

We're the nurses from the hospital,
We'll nurse you if you're ill;
How we work, we never shirk.
We can bandage up a broken bone,
Or give a bitter pill;
Make a bed, or smooth your head.
Of all the helpful things we do,
The half we can't rehearse,
We never fail, we never quail.
We are always fresh and bright,
In the middle of the night,
As is every well-bred nurse!

REFRAIN :

If we set our caps for you, sirs,
You will have not half a chance;
To our apron strings we'll tie you,
And we'll lead you such a dance!
Are you young and tall and handsome,
Can you boast a well-filled purse?
Come and choose me, don't refuse me,
For your nurse, nurse, nurse!

Your temperature we will keep down,
Your spirits we'll keep up,
'Tis our way, every day;
As to gruel, we're not cruel,
Only bring a little cup,
Nice and sweet, good to eat!
We will take your respiration,
Take your pulse, your time, your purse;
That is true, so we do;
And we never eat nor sleep,
And we always silence keep,
As does every well-bred nurse!

REFRAIN.

ACT II

(The Battle room in Mission Hospital. Mr. Armitage seated in a chair near the bed; Miss Whitney folding comforters and shaking pillows, singing as she works).

MISS WHITNEY: "Now, Mr. Armitage, we are all ready.

How do you feel, are you strong enough to try the journey across the room?"

MR. ARMITAGE: "Strong? If it wasn't for that twisted knee I could run a race, or put Tom Frisbee's shoulders to the mat."

MISS WHITNEY: "That sounds fine; but you mustn't get well too fast, or our little scheme will fall through."

MR. ARMITAGE: "Trust me for that. I can play the interesting invalid indefinitely, and live on gruel and hope! But I wish I could see some signs of her relenting."

MISS WHITNEY: "Don't *you* see the signs? Well, I do. Things are going to come to a climax soon, I'm sure of it."

MR. ARMITAGE: "It's awfully good of you to say that, and to cheer a fellow up the way you do. I certainly appreciate it and all the rest you've done for me."

MISS WHITNEY: "Thank you, but I only do my duty—not at all difficult in this case. And now let's try to walk. Don't be afraid to lean on me; I'm very strong." (*Miss Conover steps inside the room and quickly withdraws as Mr. Armitage is seated in a reclining chair*).

MISS WHITNEY: "How do you feel now, Mr. Armitage? Are you tired? I am afraid the exertion has been too much for you." (*Rings bell, which is answered by Miss Conover*).

MR. ARMITAGE: "O, no, not at all. It's a relief to stretch my legs a little. And then I had your arm to lean on!"—

MISS WHITNEY: "Miss Conover, mix an egg nogg for my patient, please."

MR. ARMITAGE: "O, say now, Miss Whitney, I'm not going to take an egg nogg. I loathe the sickish stuff, and I don't need it!" (*Miss Conover starts to go*).

MISS WHITNEY: "Just a minute, Miss Conover, please. Mr. Armitage, you are recovering from the bruises and the nervous shock of a severe fall. You must have frequent nourishment. Now I want you to take the egg nogg. You will, won't you? For my sake, I am so anxious to have you get strong?"

MR. ARMITAGE: "O, if you put it that way I can hardly refuse. All right, I'll take it."

MISS WHITNEY: "Thank you." (*To Miss Conover*): "Bring the egg nogg." (*Exit Miss Conover*). "Don't you believe she'll put vinegar in it? You should have seen her face!"

MR. ARMITAGE: "Really? Say, we're not carrying this thing too far, are we?"

MISS WHITNEY: "Not a bit of it; don't be afraid of that. You mustn't begin to weaken now. Shall we go on with our story?" (*Reads from "One too Many"*): "'I did not dream you had been engaged before,' murmured Florence, pensively. 'Has it been over long?'"

"'Nine weeks,' returned Dick, half laughing, half grave.

"Why was it over—Richard?"

"Ah, such rare delight in hearing her pronounce his name with rising blushes!

"I could hardly make you understand, Florence. It was the aggregate result of a thousand accumulated troubles. We were never intended for each other,—in fact, the thing was broken off because a happy fate had you in store for me, my beautiful darling!" (During the reading Miss Conover enters, coughs and finally comes forward and sets the glass down with a bang).

MISS WHITNEY: "O, here's our egg nogg. Thank you, Miss Conover, and now re-arrange the dresser and the medicines on the table." (To Mr. Armitage): "Now, I'm going to let you drink this all yourself. Can you take it with your left hand? That's it—and I will go on with the reading." (Reads again): "But what happened finally?" Florence coaxed. Dick looked foolish. 'She was embroidering,' said he, a little embarrassed, 'and asked my opinion about a leaf. I told her I hated those stiff pre-Raphaelite patterns, everything vertical and horizontal, without a natural feature to any flower. Then she quoted something at me out of a book, and I shrugged my shoulders—After that she decided we were better apart. Her aunt was going to Europe the day following, and she joined the party.'

"'You could never have cared for each other,' said Florence, gazing at him with a beautiful, tender smile. I suppose you both had made a mistake. Fancy, now, *our* separating because you didn't like my embroidery.'" (Miss Whitney pauses).

MR. ARMITAGE: "How beautifully you read. I never knew before how delightful it is to be read to and taken care of. And to think we have known one another only ten days."

MISS WHITNEY: "True friendship is not measured by the flight of time. In our story, for instance, Florence and Richard"—

MR. ARMITAGE: "A lucky chap, that, even if his name is the same as mine."

MISS WHITNEY: "But do you really think a man could be off with the old love and on with a new one in such a short time?"

MR. ARMITAGE: "That would depend on the man, and something on circumstances. You see, Irene had been so unkind to him, no wonder the poor fellow found comfort in the sweetness of such a girl as Florence. And I fancy a man is all the more likely to fall desperately in love when recovering from a broken engagement."

MISS WHITNEY: "His heart is sort of caught on the fly, do you mean?"

MR. ARMITAGE: "Exactly." (*Hands her the glass and winces as he lifts his arm*).

MISS WHITNEY: "O, I'm afraid you've hurt your arm! Did you hurt it badly? Let me readjust the sling. There— isn't that better?"

MR. ARMITAGE: "Thank you, yes, it is much better. What deft fingers you have."

MISS WHITNEY: "All a matter of practice. Miss Conover, please hand me my thermometer. It is on the dresser, don't you see it?" (*Takes the thermometer*).

MR. ARMITAGE: "O, it's all foolishness, taking my temperature."

MISS WHITNEY: "Indeed it is not. You have had fever nearly every day. You had a very serious fall."

MR. ARMITAGE: "But like another distinguished personage, I'm not quite as black and blue as I am painted. Well, if we must"—(*Takes thermometer in his mouth. Miss Whitney counts his pulse. A nurse enters with box from greenhouse, which Miss Conover takes*).

MISS CONOVER: "A box for your patient, Miss Whitney."

MISS WHITNEY: "O, isn't this lovely! Here's a surprise for you, Mr. Armitage." (*Opens box*). "O, what exquisitely lovely carnations! There isn't any card. I wonder who your attentive friend is!" (*Miss Conover picks up the wrappings*).

MR. ARMITAGE: "Ah—hm—that is—well, they are not for me. I—I got Miss Phipps to 'phone for them, that I might have the pleasure of presenting them myself to my devoted nurse."

MISS WHITNEY: "For me? Really? How lovely! And by what subtle telepathy did you find out that carnations are my favorite flowers? And these are so beautiful!" (*Miss Conover drops and breaks a glass*). "Miss Conover, if you want to be a nurse, you'll have to learn to be more quiet. Get a broom and dust pan, and sweep up those pieces." (*Exit Miss Conover*).

MR. ARMITAGE: "I say, Miss Whitney, we don't want to overdo this thing. I hate to hurt her feelings. I feel like a cad"—

MISS WHITNEY (*arranging carnations in a vase on the table*): "No danger of overdoing it. If you will only keep up your courage, you will feel like a happy lover soon." (*Miss Conover enters as she speaks*).

MR. ARMITAGE: "Do you really mean it?" (*Catching her hand, which he drops at sight of Miss Conover*). "O, hang it all, now I have done it. Won't you go on with the story, Miss Whitney?" (*Miss Whitney turns pages, Miss Conover sweeps up pieces and goes out with head held high*).

MISS WHITNEY (*laughing*): "That was the most telling stroke of all. It couldn't have been better, if we'd planned it."

(*Enter Dr. Didd*). "Good morning, Doctor; you see our patient is up, clothed and in his right mind."

MR. ARMITAGE: "I'm not so sure of that."

DR. DIDD: "I'm glad to see you so much better, Dick. You look quite like yourself. Will you ring for the chart, Miss Whitney?" (*Enter Miss Conover with the chart*). "Ah, good morning, Miss Conover; the chart; that was what I wanted. What beautiful carnations, Dick; I didn't know you had any devoted friends in Asheville."

MR. ARMITAGE: "O, those carnations; they're not mine; they are Miss Whitney's. I ordered them."

DR. DIDD: "The deuce you did!"

MR. ARMITAGE (*aside*): "Why, we have to keep up the game you know, John."

DR. DIDD: "O yes of course, but you might have a little consideration for the fellow that isn't playing."

MISS WHITNEY: "And I am going to insist that the donor wears one of these beautiful flowers." (*Arranges flower on his dressing jacket*).

DR. DIDD (*aside*): "They're certainly having a mighty good time. It doesn't seem to me it's necessary to be so tremendously realistic! Upon my word, I sympathize with that little girl. (*To Miss Conover*): "You look tired this morning, Miss Conover, I hope your duties are not too heavy. We'll have to put you on a case. Just see how blooming Miss Whitney looks."

MISS CONOVER: "She does indeed. And, thank you, Dr. Didd, I am perfectly well." (*With unnecessary force*): "I never felt better in my life!"

DR. DIDD: O, I am pleased to hear it, I am sure." (*Enter Miss Phipps*). "Good morning, Miss Phipps, our patient seems to be coming on nicely. We'll just have a look at the arm now."

MISS PHIPPS: "I am glad to see you improving so rapidly, Mr. Armitage. That was a terrible fall."

MR. ARMITAGE: "My convalescence is all due to the excellent nursing. I couldn't be so ungrateful as not to get well fast with such care."

MISS PHIPPS: "Yes, Miss Whitney is a competent nurse. I'm sorry to tell you that today she has the afternoon off duty. Miss Conover, you will take Miss Whitney's place here, after dinner."

MISS CONOVER: "Very well, Miss Phipps. May I go now?"

DR. DIDD: "Not just yet, please. I want you to help me here a moment. Miss Whitney is sufficiently expert. Replace the bandage. No, do it *this* way. How your fingers shake. You must learn to control that nervousness, Miss Conover."

MISS CONOVER: "I am not in the least nervous, Dr. Didd."

DR. DIDD: "O, by the way, Dick, you remember my pretty

little stenographer? She has deserted me. She has always wanted to be a trained nurse, and at last her father has consented. She came over here to the hospital, day before yesterday."

MR. ARMITAGE: "Curious, this outbreak of nursitis. I can't see what the girls find so attractive."

MISS WHITNEY: "The patients, of course!"

MISS PHIPPS: "I will see you again Doctor, in the men's ward. Your typhoid patient has had a return of delirium, and is almost unmanageable. We've had to tie him down." (*Exit*).

DR. DIDD (*to Miss Conover*): "You've done that very well for a beginner, Miss Conover. Is it comfortable, Dick?"

MR. ARMITAGE (*with a wink*): "No, it isn't comfortable; it's too tight. I'm afraid it will stop the circulation."

DR. DIDD: "Undo it and bandage it more loosely, Miss Conover. Miss Whitney, I wish to speak with you in regard to the chart." (*They cross the room*).

MR. ARMITAGE: "Miss Conover—Esther—I can't stand this any longer."

MISS CONOVER: "I am sorry if it is still too tight—perhaps Miss Whitney"—

MR. ARMITAGE: "It isn't the bandage, that's beautifully done, Esther. It isn't my arm at all; it's my heart"—

MISS CONOVER: "O, in that case I will speak to the doctor. Perhaps you need some strychnia."

MR. ARMITAGE: "Esther, how can you be so cruel? You are so cold to me!" (*Carnation falls, she picks it up and offers it to him*). "I don't want the flower; keep it, won't you, dear?"

MISS WHITNEY (*to Dr. Didd*): "O, what a break! Was there ever anything so stupid as a man!"

MISS CONOVER: "No, thank you, Mr. Armitage. You seem to have a fancy for giving things twice." (*Puts flower down*). "Doubtless Miss Whitney will put it back for you; she is very kind."

MR. ARMITAGE: "That she is; a sweeter, kinder-hearted girl I never knew. I would be ungrateful, indeed, not to appreciate her care"—

MISS CONOVER: "Your appreciation is sufficiently evident. If you will excuse me, I have my other patients." (*Exit. Mr. Armitage broods*).

DR. DIDD: "I'm afraid, Miss Whitney, we've made a mistake; the 'little rift' seems to be widening."

MISS WHITNEY: "We haven't made a mistake; not a bit of it. You men are so dense. Just give me another chance."

DR. DIDD: "It seems to me you take too many chances. I feel like giving Dick a left-hander, when you look at him so sweetly. I probably would if the poor fellow was in fighting

trim. Don't you think it is time you were just a little bit good to me? I have to go out to the Asheville School this afternoon; you are off duty, will you go with me in the auto? Let's leave these ridiculous people to work things out for themselves."

MISS WHITNEY: "I couldn't say no to an auto ride on such a glorious day as this. Yes, I'll go."

DR. DIDD: "Good." (*To Mr. Armitage*): "See here, old man, cheer up. Don't let 'melancholy like a worm i' the bud feed on your damaged cheek.' It's bad enough to have a damaged arm and leg. But talking about cheek, I had a superb illustration of colossal cheek in the office this morning. I'll tell you about it, if you'll promise to laugh. I'd like to hear that long-forgotten sound."

MR. ARMITAGE: "Well, give us the story, and I'll do my best."

DR. DIDD: "Well, some weeks ago a woman came to me to find out what was the matter with her spine. She suffered with pain in her back, and thought she had a broken vertebra. There really wasn't anything of the kind, and I told her so, and that the pain was rheumatic. But she kept on coming, and every time insisted that there was some spinal trouble. At last she stopped coming, and then I heard that she was having special treatment for spinal disease; so I sent her my bill, as modest as I could make it. She came into the office this morning; of course I thought she'd come to pay the bill. But what in the world do you suppose she came for?"

MISS WHITNEY: "To tell you the specialist confirmed *her* diagnosis of the case."

DR. DIDD: "No, indeed; it was worse than that. She asked me to loan her \$50 to pay the other doctor!"

MR. ARMITAGE: "By George, that's about the limit. She got the money, too, didn't she?"

DR. DIDD: "I didn't say so. Goodby, Dick, till tomorrow. At three this afternoon, Miss Whitney." (*Enter Miss Conover with bowl on tray*).

MISS WHITNEY: "I'll be ready at three. And in good time here comes my patient's dinner. Miss Conover, you will find special directions for this afternoon on the chart; it's on the mantel. Now, Mr. Armitage, let me feed you your broth. Shall I break the crackers in it?"

MR. ARMITAGE: "Thanks, I don't want any crackers." (*Takes a few spoonfuls*). "Look here, I'm getting tired of being a blooming baby; give me the bowl, please." (*Drinks it*). "There; that's done with."

MISS WHITNEY (*laughing*): "You burned your mouth dreadfully, I know you did. Have you had your dinner, Miss Conover?"

MISS CONOVER: "Yes, I've had my dinner, Miss Whitney. I am on duty here now; you may go."

MISS WHITNEY: "My patient always takes a nap at this time. If you will just see that he is comfortable, I will go to dinner. Goodby, Mr. Armitage, until six o'clock—if I can stay away that long."

MR. ARMITAGE: "Goodby, I hope you have a pleasant afternoon." (*Exit Miss Whitney*).

MISS CONOVER: "Would you like to be wheeled over to the couch for your nap, Mr. Armitage?"

MR. ARMITAGE: "Thank you, no. It is so long since I have been allowed to sit up, I am going to stay in the chair."

MISS CONOVER: "Then, if you are comfortable and there is nothing I can do for you, I will go on with my sewing while you sleep."

MR. ARMITAGE: "But I'm not comfortable; this beastly pillow is so small and hard"—(*throws it across the room*). "Isn't there a softer one on the couch?"

MISS CONOVER: "Why Rich—Mr. Armitage, you musn't throw things around like that; you'll hurt your arm!" (*Adds another pillow and sits down in chair across the room*).

MR. ARMITAGE: "Well, I don't care if I do. Don't go away off over there, Esther."

MISS CONOVER: "I forbid you to speak to me by that name, Mr. Armitage."

MR. ARMITAGE: "Why, you came mighty near calling me Richard, just now, you know you did."

MISS CONOVER: "If I did, it was a mere impulse, an accident."

MR. ARMITAGE: "Well, so was this. Won't you please come over here, Miss Conover? I want to talk to you, and I'm not sportsman enough to hit the mark at such long range."

MISS CONOVER: "I cannot allow you to talk to me, except in my—my professional capacity, and besides it is time for you to go to sleep." (*Goes on with sewing*).

MR. ARMITAGE: "How can a fellow sleep, with such a tantalizing view of the back of the most bewitching little head in the world! Turn around, won't you please, that I may see your face?"

MISS CONOVER: "After what I just said, I am, of course, to suppose that you are addressing me as your nurse. I wonder that Miss Whitney"—

MR. ARMITAGE: "Why do you keep bringing up Miss Whitney? She hasn't anything in the world to do with it. Esther—I beg pardon, Miss Conover—aren't you almost ready to give up this ridiculous project?"

MISS CONOVER: "If by 'ridiculous project' you mean trained

nursing, my resolution to follow that avocation is more firmly fixed than ever. I shall *never* give it up."

MR. ARMITAGE: "Well, I hardly expected a different answer. In our long, and—pardon me—somewhat intimate acquaintance, if there was anything I admired in your character, Esther, it was your firmness. Having once reached a perfectly logical conclusion by a clear course of reasoning, you always adhered to your decision. Of course, in our little quarrels when you said you would never speak to me again as long as you lived, you *did* take it back; but that was because you could prove that it was all my fault. Esther, I was once as dear to you as trained nursing. Can't you further exercise that admirable unchangeableness of yours, and refuse to give me up, too?"

MISS CONOVER: "I haven't got you to give up. And now, Mr. Armitage, I must insist, as your nurse, that you rest in silence if you won't sleep."

MR. ARMITAGE: "All right, I will. But won't you first answer me just one question?"

MISS CONOVER: "In my professional capacity—yes."

MR. ARMITAGE: "We might strain a point, and call it professional—since if you had never thrown me over, I would not now be in the hospital and under your care"——

MISS CONOVER: "That is too much. You may think me a weak and credulous woman"——

MR. ARMITAGE: "I think you're just the dearest and the sweetest little girl in the universe! O, I could tell you a great deal more that I think!"

MISS CONOVER: "It is not necessary! And you can't expect me to believe, Mr. Armitage, what you just said about being here in the hospital. No amount of mental disquiet, caused by—by a severed relationship, could break a bone or strain a ligament."

MR. ARMITAGE: "Now that is just where you are tremendously mistaken, my learned little nurse. It was mental and emotional disquiet. Do you know that when I learned that you were at Mission Hospital, and that hard-hearted doctor that poses as a friend of mine, wouldn't inoculate me with appendicitis or typhoid fever or any other old thing, I jumped out of his office window to break a bone or two and get in here"——

MISS CONOVER: "Jumped out the window! To break your bones! That *I* might nurse you? O, Rich—Mr. Armitage, was that your plan?"

MR. ARMITAGE (*aside*): "Can a fellow tell a lie in a case like this, or must it be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?" (*To Miss Conover*): "Well—that wasn't it exactly. Of course, I knew you were a probationer, and—and not likely to be given special duty, but—but I hoped to see you—and talk with you."

MISS CONOVER: "O, I understand! And you have been here ten days, and this is the first time you have found an opportunity to speak with me! Such devotion is touching."

MR. ARMITAGE: "Esther, you are so unreasonable. How"——

MISS CONOVER: "Then why try to reason with me? Will you ask your question or oblige me by going to sleep?"

MR. ARMITAGE: "I'm not sleepy. As a nurse you are not especially soothing. There are some of the tricks of your trade you haven't learned yet. Miss Whitney rubs my head—or fans me—or reads poetry."

MISS CONOVER: "Unfortunately, I am not Miss Whitney, though I recognize her superior attractions; but I can give you a sleeping potion."

MR. ARMITAGE: "You can try to, but I'll not take it. I can keep my mouth shut!"

MISS CONOVER: "You haven't been able to so far. Now please put an end to all this futile talk. Things can never, never be as they once were." (*Sighs deeply*). "Ask your question and have it over with."

MR. ARMITAGE: "Well then I will. Can you assure me that you have no regrets, that you are perfectly happy in your chosen calling? Can you? Honest now."

MISS CONOVER: "At first, I confess that I was very lonely and sad. I had misgivings. If you had appealed to me then—But during the last week or so I have been thoroughly convinced that I acted for the best. I am glad that I broke the engagement. I am glad that I came to the hospital! I—I—I am perfectly happy!" (*Her voice breaks, she sobs in her handkerchief*).

MR. ARMITAGE: "Your happiness is very evident. But, Esther, don't you think you might sacrifice a little of your joy for my peace of mind? If you persist in this folly, there is no knowing what I may be driven to!"

MISS CONOVER: "Of course I do not know, but as I have eyes I may at least guess! And now that I have answered your question, if you *will* talk, kindly drop the personal element from the conversation. It is a shock and a grief to me to think that you are here because of my letter."

MR. ARMITAGE (*aside*): "She can't drop the personal element any more than I can." (*To Miss Conover*): "Yes, because of that letter, Esther. A cheerful little valentine, wasn't it, to send me? How could you do it?"

MISS CONOVER: "As I was saying, it is a shock to think that you risked your life to be near me. If—if only"—(*Stops and shakes her head*).

MR. ARMITAGE: "If what, Esther? Do go on!"

MISS CONOVER: "No, I shall not, *must* not say another word that might not be spoken by Miss Phipps herself."

MR. ARMITAGE: "All right. Let's talk about trained nursing. I suppose that is permitted! Do you realize that the average life of a trained nurse is only seven years? Do you know that you are exposing yourself to infection from a thousand horribly different but equally dangerous germs? That your pretty face may be spoiled by small pox, Esther, or—or—or measles? That you might be strangled to death, in the dead of the night, by some man in a raging delirium? O, I can't bear to think of it. It is horrible!"

MISS CONOVER: "I am not in the least afraid of infection, Mr. Armitage; nor have I any fear of delirious and unmanageable patients. Courage and bravery are essentials for a trained nurse."

MR. ARMITAGE (*angrily*): "O, I give it up. I may as well go to sleep." (*Shuts his eyes and composes himself to sleep. Miss Conover goes on with her sewing, turning a little in her chair and looking at him. A noise is heard without, as it increases and voices are heard calling loudly, she moves her chair a little nearer his*).

MISS CONOVER (*timidly*): "Mr. Armitage, Mr. Armitage—did you speak, Mr. Armitage?" (*Miss Seymour rushes in, greatly frightened*).

MISS SEYMOUR: "O, Miss Conover, Miss Conover, that dreadful typhoid patient has gotten out of the ward. He's smashed everything in the diet kitchen! He tore Miss Blake's apron off and sprained Miss Harrison's arm! He is raging all over this floor. The nurses can do nothing with him. He brushes them off as if—as if they were mosquitoes! O, I'm so frightened! Miss Phipps says to lock your door, and I'm to go and find the orderly, we don't know where he's gone."

MISS CONOVER: "O dear, O dear! There isn't any key in this door!" (*Looks for it wildly*). "Can't you 'phone for the fire department or something?"

MISS SEYMOUR: "The fire department? What for—to put him out? They have 'phoned for a policeman; there'll be somebody here soon. I *must* see if I can find the orderly!" (*Exit: noises and calls increase; Miss Conover pushes table and chairs against the door. As the door is pushed from without, she tries to hold it*).

MISS CONOVER: "O dear! O dear! Mr. Armitage, Richard, Dick! Do wake up!" (*Enter patient*).

PATIENT: "O, there you are! I'll catch you yet. You can't fool me; I know you by that cap and apron. You'd tie me in bed, would you?" (*Chases Miss Conover about the room*).

MISS CONOVER: "O dear! O dear! Richard! Dick!"

MR. ARMITAGE (*springing to his feet*): "Great Caesar! What's all this!" (*Catches patient by the collar, trips him, and as he scrambles to his feet pushes him down in the chair. Miss Conover falls upon the couch.*)

MR. ARMITAGE: "There's nothing to be afraid of now, Esther. I've got him all right." (*Enter Miss Seymour and the orderly*). "Here orderly, take this crazy customer out of here. Put him in the strong room, if you've got one; if you haven't, build one! Such a creature as that running amuck among a lot of sick folks and women! It's outrageous! You may be thankful there's no one hurt."

ORDERLY: "Come along. Get up and come along, I say!"

PATIENT: "All right, I'm a-coming. But don't let that cyclone hit me again! O law, law!" (*Exeunt*).

MR. ARMITAGE: "He didn't hurt you, did he, Esther?"

MISS CONOVER: "O, no, no, but it was so terrible! He looked so awful, and I was sure he would catch me. And O, I'm afraid you are hurt."

MR. ARMITAGE: "O, no, I'm not; but I feel a little shaky. Would you mind getting me a glass of water?"

MISS CONOVER: "O, I know you are hurt." (*Brings the water*).

MR. ARMITAGE: "My, how the poor little hands tremble! Did the awful creature frighten you so badly? What is it, Esther?"

MISS CONOVER: "O, Dick, Dick, it isn't that. But I don't want to be a trained nurse! I hate it! I'm so unhappy!"

MR. ARMITAGE: "Well, there don't cry, Esther. You're not going to be a trained nurse if I can help it! Can't we go back about nine weeks and begin where we left off? Don't you love me just a little bit yet, Esther?"

MISS CONOVER: "Every night since I wrote you that cruel letter, every night since I decided that trained nursing was my vocation, I have prayed that I might not love you"——

MR. ARMITAGE: "Dear little girl. (*Puts his arm around her*).

MISS CONOVER: "But my prayers were not answered." (*Enter Dr. Didd and Miss Whitney; Mr. Armitage and Miss Conover start apart*).

MISS WHITNEY: "You've been having quite an exciting time, haven't you? I hope it hasn't been too much for my patient."

DR. DIDD: "It was an awful experience, Miss Conover; you must have been dreadfully frightened."

MISS CONOVER: "O, no, I wasn't frightened." (*Aside to Mr. Armitage*): "What do you suppose they think?"

MR. ARMITAGE: "They *did* think you were frightened, but you *said* you weren't. What do we care anyhow! What do we

care for all the world! John, old man, congratulate me! I have engaged a permanent nurse. She will enter on her new duties the last of April."

MISS CONOVER: "Why, Richard Armitage, I never said so."

MR. ARMITAGE: "I think it is time I was doing some of the saying."

DR. DIDD: "I'm mighty glad, Dick, and so is Miss Whitney, I know. We feel as if we'd made this match, or at least made it over!" (*Looks at Miss Whitney*).

MISS WHITNEY: "Are you going to tell them?"

DR. DIDD: "To tell them? Of course I am. I shall tell the very tree tops! Dick, here's another match—congratulate us, too! Winifred hasn't named the day, but she has promised to be a doctor's wife instead of a trained nurse." (*As they shake hands Dr. Tingle and Miss Seymour enter*).

DR. TINGLE: "Dr. Didd, I want to ask you—that is, we just came in to say—or to—to ask, if you can let me take my vacation in May? You see I want to go on a little trip with—with Miss Seymour." (*All laugh*).

MR. ARMITAGE: "A whole box of matches!"

DR. DIDD: "Certainly, certainly, that's all right, Dr. Tingle. We're all in the same boat! April—May—Winifred, how about June?" (*All advance to the front and the girls sing*).

When we set our caps for you, sirs,
You had only half a chance,
To our apron strings we've tied you,
And we'll lead you such a dance!
You are young and tall and handsome,
So for better or for worse,
You're selected and accepted,
By your nurse—nurse—nurse!

CURTAIN.



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